

K-628

1904

Wesley Henry African Union Methodist Protestant Church

Golts

Private

Wesley Henry A. U. M. P. Church in the community of Willow Hill near Golts was built in 1904 on the site of an earlier building that housed one of Kent County's earliest independent black Methodist congregations. The earliest deed found dates to 1854. The Wesley Henry congregation (also known for a time as Lee's Chapel) was unique in Kent County in not being affiliated with the white-controlled Methodist Episcopal Church, which before the Civil War sought to supervise the religious activities of its black affiliates. Instead, this church was associated with the African Union Methodist Protestant Church, which began in Wilmington in 1813 under the leadership of black preacher Peter Spencer and was the first totally independent black church in the nation, having broken away from a black congregation over which white Methodists had tried to exercise control. Though much altered, the church is typical of the county's rural simple, frame, three-part structures (vestibule-tower, nave, and chancel projection) that were derivative of the Victorian Gothic Revival style.

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. K-628

Magi No. 1506285708

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Wesley Henry African Union Methodist Protestant Church

and/or common Lee's Chapel

## 2. Location

South side Wesley Henry Church Rd., South of Hurlock Corner  
street & number Rd., .6 mile southwest of Golts ☐ not for publicationcity, town Golts ☒ vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland county Kent

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Trustees, Wesley Henry A. U. M. P. Church, c/o Mr. &amp; Mrs. Arthur Brown Sr.

street &amp; number telephone no.: 928-3893

city, town Golts state and zip code Maryland 21637

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Court House JFG 2  
liber SB 6street & number Cross Street folio 315  
298

city, town Chestertown state Maryland

## 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys NONE

title

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

Survey No. K-628

### Condition

☐ excellent  
☒ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☐ unaltered  
☒ altered

### Check one

☒ original site  
☐ moved      date of move \_\_\_\_\_

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Located with its entry gable-end facing northeast toward the unpaved southeastern section of the old road from Hurlock Corner to Delaware, the present Wesley Henry Church dates from 1904, replacing a building that burned. Like most other late nineteenth and early twentieth century rural churches in Kent County it is three-part and of frame construction. Entry is into a central gable-end vestibule with hipped-roof belfry above. Originally there was a window on each side, but they have been covered by the 1975 addition of lavatories on each side of the tower, with side-sloping shed roofs from the tower that are just beneath the main-section roof but with the same pitch. The additions' facade walls are flush with front vestibule-tower wall. The main section, or nave, is three bays deep with tall one-story walls and gable roof. At the rear gable end there is a shallow chancel projection with lower shed roof. Most surfaces, inside and outside, have been covered with modern materials. The exterior was originally clad in horizontal lapped weatherboard. The tower and its side additions are stuccoed; the other two sections are covered with large grey asphalt shingles. Two one-story mid-twentieth century additions, for a church hall, have been made (one behind the other) to the southeast side; together they cover two nave bays.

The main section (nave) measures about 24 feet wide x 40 feet deep; the three-level vestibule-tower with its side additions is 24 feet wide x 8 feet deep; and the chancel projection is about 8 feet wide x 3 feet deep. The first mid-twentieth-century church hall addition is 24 feet wide x 12 feet deep, two bays wide in the front and three in the rear. Its approach side was flush with the gable-end of the main section before the tower additions were made. The second addition was made to the rear of the first, continuing the rear slope of its gable roof with a low shed roof; it is the same width but 16 feet deep.

The weatherboard of the main section and the chancel projection was covered by large grey asphalt shingles with a black-line design. The lower portion of the vestibule-tower has stucco on wire mesh that is over the shingling and weatherboard. The same finish was applied, continuously, over the side lavatory additions's frame construction. The earlier section of the church hall is frame and finished with large blue asphalt shingles, while its rear addition is of unpainted concrete block walls.

(Continued)

# 8. Significance

Survey No. K-628

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) black history

Specific dates 1904 Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D  
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The present Wesley Henry Church in the community of Willow Hill near Golts is on the site of a previous building that seems to have housed one of Kent County's earliest independent black Methodist congregations. They earliest deed found for church property dates to 1854. The Wesley Henry congregation was unique in Kent County in not being affiliated with the white-controlled Methodist Episcopal Church, which before the Civil War sought to supervise the religious activities of its black affiliates. Instead, Wesley Henry was associated with the African Union Methodist Protestant Church which began in Wilmington in 1813 under the leadership of black preacher Peter Spencer and was the first totally independent black church in the nation, having broken away from a black congregation over which white Methodists had tried to exercise control. Though much altered, the 1904 church (replacing a building that burned) is typical of the county's rural simple frame three-part structures (vestibule-tower, nave, and chancel projection) that were derivative of the Victorian Gothic Revival style.

The now-diminished black community of Willow Hill, to the south and southwest of the village of Golts in upper Kent County, is one of the county's nineteenth-century rural black enclaves that was occupied by free blacks before the Civil War. Almost invariably these early black communities, as well as later ones, were located at the fringes of agriculturally-productive lands, on the less desirable lands that could not be easily farmed because of poor drainage or dense forests. This generalization appears true in the case of Willow Hill. To the west and northwest, up Hurlock Corner Road and Bradford Johnson Road and along the road from Millington to Massey to Sassafras were productive large farms. In the vicinity of Willow Hill itself and east to the Delaware boundary, as well as north and south on both sides of the Delaware line, was what was called the Maryland-Delaware Forest (or just the Forest or, later, the Golts Forest). Only a few farms have been carved out within this area. Though the history of blacks in Kent County has been little studied, it seems that most of the men in these early rural communities worked as farm laborers on farms that were within walking distance (though what was considered walking distance then is considerably greater than what it is now).

(Continued)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. K-628

William Henry Williams, The Garden of American Methodism: The Delmarva Peninsula, 1769-1820. Wilmington, Del.: Published for the Peninsula Conference of the United Methodist Church, 1984.

(Continue)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A 

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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Margaret Q. Fallaw, Survey Consultant  
County Commissioners of Kent County

organization Historical Society of Kent County date May 23, 1986  
Court House 778-4600

street & number Church Alley telephone 778-3499

city or town Chestertown state Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
Shaw House  
21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 269-2438

The main section and chancel rest on parged bricks piers; the parging of the enlarged vestibule-tower section extends to the ground so that the foundation is not visible. The foundation of the hall is block.

On each long side of the main section, within the walls between the second and third bay, there is a square brick chimney, originally used for stoves but now used for gas heaters. The southeast one seems to have been shortened and has a brick hood; the northwest one is taller and partially parged.

The roof of the main section is of corrugated metal; that of the chancel is of sheet standing-seam metal. The tower's hipped roof is covered with wood shingles while the lower lavatory additions' roofs are of black asphalt shingles. The church hall roof is of asphalt shingles.

The rafters of the main section are exposed, with ends cut perpendicular to the rafters; there is no fascia or soffit. The rafter ends are so light (ca. 2" x 3") that they probably are false rafter ends. Roof ends and eaves oversail about 15". There are no end lookouts; just the decking creates the overhang. Plastic gutters are hung from the roof surface. The chancel roof overhangs about 12" all around. A deep (c. 10") fascia has been fastened recently onto the rafter ends.

The tower's middle level is enclosed except for a semi-circular window with four radiating lights of clear glass, similar to the window in the gable at the Golts Methodist Church (K-627). There is now a large yard light fastened to the wall below the window. The belfry is open on all four sides, with only a heavy post at each corner supporting the hipped roof. A heavy band of composite moldings at the lower edge of the open belfry divides it from the wall below; this appears to include a deep fascia with crown of cyma and lower cove. Wire netting is now in the openings. The bell carriage can be seen from the ground; the bell is said to be rung only for funerals. The tower roof overhangs ca. 10"-12" on all sides. The cornice crown molding appears to be the same as that on the banding below. Both may be replacements of original moldings. The underside of the tower roof is narrow, beaded tongue-and-groove boards.

The main entry is through probably original double doors in the center of the vestibule-tower; the opening is 48" wide. Each door has 2-over-2 panels that have been recessed and slightly raised. The knob is porcelain. Leading to the doors are three concrete steps around three sides of a concrete stoop, which has an added concrete step just below the wooden door sill. Above the entry is a gable-roofed canopy with wood shingles. The canopy is supported by simple, triangulated wall brackets. There are two entries into the church hall, one in the southeast end of the earlier section (into the kitchen) and one into the rear of the second addition, into the banquet room.

The quite tall nave windows are double-hung with 2-over-2 lights. The sash opening is 65" x 30-3/4". The glass is clear, but "contact" paper with a stained-glass pattern has been applied over white paint in the lower sash; there is white paint only on the glass of the upper sash. Trim is plain except for lintel trim consisting of a drip cap above a cyma reversa with two lower  
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beads, similar to the trim at the Golts Public School. There are wood-framed screens but no sign of there having been shutters.

The chancel has a narrow double-hung window with 1-over-1 lights on each side and no windows in the rear wall; the sash openings measure 16-1/2" x 64" high. The lower sash have the applied contact paper; the top lights are clear.

The vestibule windows, one on each side and like the nave windows, were removed when the lavatory additions were built. The single windows of the main section to each side of the main entry were covered with boards on the interior at this time, though the interior architraves are still exposed in the nave. The windows' exterior, now within the lavatories, were covered. The new lavatories each have a single hopper window high in the wall. The church hall windows are double-hung and 3-light awnings.

On the interior there is wall-to-wall carpeting over pine floors. On the ca. 11'-4" high walls there is ca. 45" high wainscoting (including the rail) on the lower walls of vertical, beaded tongue-and-groove board about 3" wide. The ca. 2-1/2" rail cap has chamfered edges, with an astragal between. Formerly painted plaster above the wainscoting was covered about 1950 with decorative plywood paneling. The wainscoting was continuous around the two chimney projections. The upper chimneys were plastered but are now panelled. There is no baseboard. The ceiling is now covered with 12" x 12" interlocking tile. It formerly was straight across and was covered with the same narrow beaded material as the wainscoting. The vestibule walls and ceiling were originally also covered with this material. The window trim is 4" wide and plain, with recessed bulls-eye corner blocks. The 5" deep apron is plain except for a chamfered lower edge. The sill is the same as the chair rail cap. Wainscoting and trim are painted white; wall panelling is blue.

Between the vestibule and nave there is a pair of five-panel swinging doors. Almost in the location of the original first window of the southeast side a door opening has been cut through to the earlier section of the church hall. In the opening there is a 4-lights-over-2-panels door, with stained-glass paper in the lights.

The pews are not the originals, nor are they probably as numerous. Now in place are a set from a church in Hockessin, Delaware, replacing earlier straight-backed, uncomfortable pews. There is a wide central aisle and a secondary aisle across to the hall door. As in many local churches of the period, in front of the chancel projection there is a double platform. A simple three-sided altar rail is around much of the perimeter of the lower platform. Formerly it was open between simple corner posts fastened to the platform and with a broad, plain rail that is now painted black. Now there is infill of panelling. Extending to the right there is a secondary platform for a choir that sits behind an extension of the altar rail in eleven theater seats. A piano is in the southwest corner of the nave. The pulpit is centered on the higher, smaller platform, ca. 13" above the lower one and still within the nave. Steps at the end nave wall lead to the platforms from each side. A small communion table is between the altar rail and pulpit.

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The chancel projection contains three dark, ornate Victorian chairs from a Cecilton church. The entire chancel floor is the height of the second platform. The chancel ceiling is flat and panelled. A large velvet wall hanging of the nativity hangs on the back wall. The large rectangular opening in the gable-end wall to the chancel projection is trimmed with ca. 4-1/2" wide plain trim with narrow, vertical, applied, raised panels created of composite moldings: a small flat ogee on the perimeter and central double astragals. These carpenter-created panels are on both pilaster and lintel trim. The lintel has two such panels, spaced, with an applied square in the center and at panel ends.

There are no outbuildings on the site except for a "necessary" to the east at the edge of the church lot.

The church is sited with its entry gable-end about 25 feet from the unpaved road that enters the community after crossing the railroad tracks and rounding a curve. There is a parking pull-in to the east of the church with a large propane tank nearby. About 10 feet in front of the main entry there is a staked and roped hole for one end of a drainage culvert that passes under the road, evidently to drain the cemetery. The somewhat uneven graveyard lies to the southwest and west of the church; graves are scattered, most in clusters. Some are unmarked, and some stones are not readable. Many stones date from the 1940s to the 1970s; the oldest marked stones seen date from the 1890s. The grounds are planted with lawns and some shrub plantings, especially in the graveyard area; they seem to have been planted by families at family plots. Several large trees, mostly evergreen, stand to the church's west side. The grounds are well-kept.

From the site there are no views to the sides and rear--the property is surrounded on three sides by woods; farmland is beyond. To the northwest up the road the railroad track and crossing can be seen, where there is a house trailer. A large house can be seen beyond, at the turn of the Hurlock Corner road. Across the road from the church is a woods, with a one-story small house perhaps from the early twentieth century farther to the northeast. Other dwellings of this now-small community are hidden from view by growth within formerly open or occupied areas.



Most likely many of the early residents of the community or their parents had been slaves not long before 1854, the date of the first deed for a church there. From the late eighteenth century on, however, the ratio of free blacks in Kent County to enslaved blacks increased, largely because of Methodist and Quaker pressure, as well as economic considerations. A reading of old Kent County wills shows that many manumissions were provided by will in the first half of the nineteenth century. By the census of 1850 there were slightly more blacks than whites in Kent County (5,914 to 5,616), but more than half the blacks were free (3,143 free to 2,627 slave).

On October 13, 1854, a deed (JFG 2/315) conveyed one acre of land from Ringgold[s] Adventure, the farm of Elizabeth McGuire, to the trustees "of the Colored Methodist Protestant Church of Wesley Henry Chapel of Kent County." The trustees were John Hall, William Hurt, Hemsley Emory, Isaac Lee, George Dickson, Henry March, Perry Monson, George Nohes [sp?], and William Thompson. The price was \$12. Presumably a simple frame church was built on this lot soon afterwards.

The location of the property is hard to pin-point exactly without survey information for the farm and the one adjoining it, but it does appear to be the present church property, or at least part of it. The church property now is surrounded on three sides by the Pritt Farm, which is said to be the old McGuire farm, and the parcel clearly seems to have been taken from the farm. (The church property is said to be shown on plats for this farm.) The survey began at an old stump at the northeast corner of the acre plot that was also a corner for the McGuire farm and land of Eben[ezer] Welch. The latter lived at Federal Hill Farm (K-632), near Sassafras, and evidently simply owned land in this area. The distance of the first three courses, between three of the boundary stones, was 12-7/10 perches, or about 209.5 feet; the fourth side mentioned no distance, just closing the survey. The intention was to convey a parcel about 209.5 feet square. The first course description mentions a stone "in the old road." Presumably this is the never-paved road passing in front of the church, the one that is shown on the 1860 Martenet map of Kent County as the southeastern end of the road from Hurlock Corner to Delaware. Although this part of the road is not shown on the 1877 atlas map, its remnants are shown on the 1942 (updated 1953) Millington quadrangle map of the U. S. Geological Survey. It was not until after the coming of the railroad, perhaps even close to the turn of the century, that the Hurlock Corner Road was altered, making an almost 90 degree turn to the northeast, just northwest of the railroad track, and leading into the present-day crossroads community of Golts. The black community of Willow Hill was centered around this cut-off portion of the old Hurlock Corner Road, south of where the train track came to be located. A later name for the McGuire farm seems to have been Willow Grove Farm, from which the community name of Willow Hill evidently derives, though the community also seems to have become known as Browntown.

The denominational affiliation of the Willow Hill church was and still is unique in Kent County. Although in Kent County there came to be churches affiliated with the non-white African Methodist Episcopal and African Methodist Episcopal Zion churches, this seems to have been the only one that was African Union Methodist Protestant.

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Up until the first schism within the Methodist church in the late 1820s, all Methodists had been part of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Increasing dissatisfaction with church governance led to the breaking away nationally of a group that was called Methodist Protestant Church, which allowed the laity a larger role and claimed to be less authoritarian. Several Kent County churches, notably Christ Methodist Church in Chestertown and Wesley Chapel near Rock Hall, were early Methodist Protestant congregations. Whether there ever was any direct connection, however, between the Methodist Protestants and the African Union Methodist Protestant Church is not known by this writer. The A. U. M. P. Church seems to have been a direct offshoot of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Both free and enslaved blacks were early drawn to Methodism in spite of the paradoxes it presented. As William Williams says in his book about the early history of Methodism on the Delmarva Peninsula, "no other religious group on the Peninsula treated blacks better. Early Methodist itinerants worked very hard to make black converts and spoke out in a clear voice against slavery. By contrast, at least some clergy of other denominations seemed disinterested in blacks, and a few supported slavery. Even the Quakers and Nicholites, who spoke out vehemently against slavery, showed little interest in recruiting black members." (p. 112) In addition blacks, as others, found appealing the Methodist emphasis on the conversion experience, rather than formal instruction and ritual. In the beginning both blacks and whites worshipped together, as befitted a religion that held that blacks were not inferior to whites. Yet black Methodists in practice were relegated to third-class status, below the second-class status of white women. As Williams says, "Blacks were restricted to the back of the church or the gallery during regular worship, were limited to an area behind the speaker's platform at camp meetings, and could only join all-black class meetings, which were often led by white men. There is even some indication that while in the gallery, blacks were forced to stand." (p. 111) Although a few blacks were known as effective preachers (such as Harry Hosier), all the regular circuit appointments as ministers were for white men.

In spite of these paradoxes, blacks on the Peninsula became Methodists in great numbers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in even greater percentages of the population as a whole than did whites. However, black dissatisfaction increased as the Methodist stance against slavery seemed to soften during the early nineteenth century, with black Methodists taking note of this change and black membership slowly eroding after about 1810. White Methodists also seemed increasingly uncomfortable with the emotionalism and demonstrative worship sometimes shown by black members and sought to control it. In some cases enthusiasm resulted in physical damage to church buildings, and some churches came to require a white member's presence at any meeting of blacks. This also might have related to white fear of blacks' using such occasions to air their grievances and organize themselves against white oppression.

Even though in Delaware slavery was far weaker than on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and in Wilmington there were large numbers of free blacks by 1800, Wilmington white Methodists were determined to superintend the activities of black Methodists. Frustrated by their inferior status within the  
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church, black members of Asbury Church there (at Third and Walnut Streets) in 1800 or 1801 "began holding their own religious services in black homes and in shady groves along the edge of the city," though they continued to attend the regular services in their customary place in the gallery. They were also permitted to use the main level for class meetings when the church was empty. In June 1805 benches were broken and the whites accused the blacks of having left the church dirty, then restricted future black meetings to the gallery. This was the catalyst for black members in 1805 to leave Asbury church to build their own church, Ezion Church, a short distance away at Ninth and French Streets. Though Ezion Church did have its own lay preachers, class leaders, and trustees, it was still under the Methodist Discipline and had to accept the same white preacher assigned to Asbury Church. The blacks felt they had the right to refuse any white preacher they felt unsuitable, but "in 1812 Ezion's white pastor, James Bateman, informed the black congregation's leaders that they had no right to reject a pastor and that he exercised ultimate authority over the church and its activities." When the blacks of Ezion refused to agree with him, Bateman dismissed the trustees and class leaders without a hearing. At this point, led by local black preacher Peter Spencer, "thirty-one black families left Ezion in 1813 and, with financial support from wealthy Quakers, erected the African Union Church, or Old Union as it was called, nearly opposite Ezion. Spencer became the pastor of a congregation that maintained it was Methodist but not Methodist Episcopal. Old Union was the first truly independent black church in the United States and the parent body of the African Union Methodist Protestant and the Union American Methodist Episcopal churches. (p. 116) The headquarters of the A. U. M. P. Church is still at Old Union. Spencer's group apparently stood alone for some time. According to Williams, "there is no further evidence on the Peninsula of black agitation for independence from white Methodism until 1822, when some members of Richard Allen's African Methodist Episcopal movement, based in Philadelphia, were accused of trying to win over black Methodists in the Smyrna, Delaware, area." (p. 118) It should be noted that this is not far from the Golts area.

Williams' book does not treat the later history of this separate black Methodist group, and one must await his forthcoming book about later periods of Peninsula Methodist history or study the church records of the A. U. M. P. church to the extent that they were kept and survived. This Methodist denomination is still separate, having not joined in the union in 1939 of Methodist Episcopal, Methodist Protestant, and Methodist Episcopal (South), nor in later consolidations made by the main Methodist group. Specific, detailed knowledge about the early years of Wesley Henry Church has been lost over time, but one must assume that the blacks of Willow Hill found this particular variety of Methodism, with its independence from whites, more appealing than affiliation with the Methodist Episcopal Church or the main Methodist Protestant Church. (There may never have been any black Methodist Protestant churches in Kent County. There are many, however, that began and continued as Methodist Episcopal.) This affiliation may be an indication of the extent to which people in the Golts area looked to and were influenced by Delaware activities because of proximity. This is the only A. U. M. P. church in Kent County, and there is also only one in Queen Anne's County, with perhaps two or three more on the Eastern Shore; there are three in Wilmington.

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The reason for the name of this congregation is only half clear, the Wesley apparently being John and/or Charles Wesley, considered the founders of Methodism. This writer does not know the reason for the appending of the name "Henry." However, the 1854 deed does show that Wesley Henry Chapel was the original name. It later also became known as Lee's Chapel because of the important role played by Isaac Lee, who interestingly seems to have broken away from Wesley Henry Chapel (reason unknown) to help found the other black church at Golts-Willow Hill, a church that first was Methodist Episcopal but that later became African Methodist Episcopal.

The 1860 Martenet's Map of Kent County shows an "African Meeting House" near the location of Wesley Henry Church, but to the north of the Hurlock Corner-Delaware road, between it and Bradford Johnson Road. This seems to be a mislocating of the church on a map that is not noted for its accuracy. The "Maguire" farm is shown well to the south of both the church and the road instead of adjacent. That Wesley Henry was an unusually early independent black congregation is indicated by the mapping of only a few other black churches, designated as "African M. H.", "African M. E.", or "Col'd M. E.": one west of Chesterville, the predecessor of the present Asbury Church in Chesterville Forest; the church at Fountain-Big Woods near Urieville; and near Hynson's Chapel near Edesville. Janes Methodist Church was also known to have started by this date in Chestertown. There may have been more black churches in existence, but they are not shown on the 1860 map. It is probable that many more were founded during the Civil War years. By the time of the 1877 atlas map, they are numerous. The school list of Kent County churches with schools supported by the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People is fairly lengthy (see below).

The next deed found that seems to involve Wesley Henry Church is dated September 28, 1867 (JKH 7/266), though it is not called by that name in the deed but Lee's Chapel, even though Isaac Lee is not listed as a trustee. What is confusing is that this is a conveyance from the church for a one-acre piece of land. Unless the church bought additional land between 1854 and 1867, or unless this is not really the same church group, Wesley Henry Church would seem to have been deeding away its property entirely. Or perhaps this was a temporary arrangement, later reversed but the transaction not found by this researcher. According to this deed, the trustees of Lee's Chapel (John Hall, George W. Dudley, Lewis McKenney, Thomas Manden [sp?], Joseph Manden, Joseph Davis, William Hurtt, Sr., and Hemsley Emory) granted one acre to R. M. Janney of Baltimore in trust for the "purpose of erecting or allowing to be erected thereon a School House for the use, benefit, and education of the Colored People of the upper District of Kent County forever." No price was mentioned. The survey description is sketchy. It mentions only beginning at the stone at the public road leading from a road from Massey to Sassafras and running through by Joseph Mann's house and by Lee's Chapel into the Forest. This would appear to be the old road from Hurlock Corner, including its southeastern section past Wesley Henry Church. It states that the plot was to be used only for a school, church, and burying ground.

This writer does not know who R. M. Janney was. Perhaps he was a leader of the A. U. M. P. Church and bringing church property under conference ownership. However, this is not likely since he is noted as being a

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Baltimorean, and the church headquarters have remained in Wilmington from the beginning of the denomination. What is more likely, however, is that Janney was connected with the post-Civil War drive to provide schools for Maryland blacks. Kent County public schools for whites in general had been in a deplorable state before the state school reform of 1865; they were too few, in poor physical condition, and scorned for poor calibre of teachers. There do not seem to have been any schools in Kent County available to blacks before the Civil War; the report of the Kent County School system to the state in 1868 lists only white schools. Since 1833 in Kent County district school trustees had the power to levy a school tax on the property of whites but not that of blacks. Evidently since no schools were to be provided for blacks, they were not to be taxed either. The few blacks who became literate and able to compute achieved these skills outside a school setting.

The Maryland Constitution of 1864, that took effect in 1865, was intended to provide throughout the state a uniform system of free public education by forcing the counties to meet certain standards and by providing some state funding for schools to supplement local monies. The article seems to have made no mention of the color of the students, in contrast to the earlier school law which specifically exempted blacks' property from the school tax, with the implication that there were to be no black schools. According to Eleanor Lynn, "A minority of delegates to the convention which wrote the 1864 Constitution wished to prevent the school fund from being used to educate Negroes. . . . However, it was apparent that if the school fund were to be appropriated on the basis of only white population, counties with large Negro populations would get less money, and the move to prohibit Negro schools was defeated." (p. 50) As noted above, however, by the time of the 1868 Kent County school report, no black public schools seemed to exist in the county.

In 1866 the new state school superintendent, the Rev. Libertus Van Bokkelen, acknowledged that indeed "nothing has yet been done for this class by the State. . . ." but also stated "I believe it to be the duty and interest of the State to provide opportunities of education for all who live within her borders and therefor repeat the recommendation that separate schools for colored children be established in every district where 30 or more pupils will regularly attend." He praised the efforts of "benevolent individuals" and one group in particular for trying to accomplish what the state had not yet done. The group was the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People, whose abbreviated name was the Baltimore Association. According to Lynn (pp. 51-52), the association was formed in November 1864 "when a group of more than thirty Baltimore businessmen, lawyers and clergymen gathered to determine what they could do to promote Negro education." Some of these were veterans of the abolition movement. The association solicited contributions widely, even abroad, and used the money to provide supplies and pay teachers they recruited to teach in schools in various parts of the state; local blacks supplemented association funding. The schools in Kent County seem at first to have been held in the black churches, though scanty evidence seems to indicate that at least some separate buildings adjacent to churches were soon built to serve as schools. Janney may have been connected with this private movement to provide schools for black children.

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The first annual report of the Baltimore Association, dated November 1865, includes 18 "county schools" (presumably distinct from Baltimore City schools. Of these 18, 6 and perhaps 7 were in Kent County (at Millington, Edesville, Fountain Church, Chestertown, Worton, Quaker Neck, and perhaps Hopewell X Roads). All the Kent County schools had been started between September 27 and November 1, 1865. Several of the teachers wrote of the large response from a population eager to learn; the Worton teacher reported 39 "night-scholars" and 22 day students. However, there was a dark side--threatening talk and violence from whites opposed to the education of blacks. The churches at Millington (John Wesley Church) and at Edesville (Holy Trinity) were burned in October and November because of the schools they supported, and churches were burned in nearby counties as well. A separate school building in Millington may have been burned in addition to the church. (Lynn, pp. 52-58)

James Martin Wright in his book The Free Negro in Maryland, 1634-1860, indicates that the intimidation was successful and that the schools were short-lived (pp. 206-207, quoted in Lynn, p. 58). In 1870 the state did begin to support schools for blacks, though at first (to make it politically acceptable) only with tax money from blacks, which proved impracticable. By 1873 public schools for blacks were reported to have been started in all the counties, supported by the general taxation, and by 1881 there were 18 black schools in Kent County. With the goal achieved, the Baltimore Association is said to have ceased its schools program. (Lynn, p. 58) However, the Willow Hill school deed falls between the intimidation of 1865 and the end of the Baltimore Association program, evidently about 1870. Whether a school was ever built during this period on what seems to have been the church property is not known, but it was not until about 30 years later that there is another deed for a school lot.

A deed for school property was executed in 1905 (JTD 10/499) for property sold in 1902 by trustees for the late Henry W. Archer of Robert, but this time to the Board of School Commissioners of Kent County. The price was \$35 for a half-acre lot "on the north side of the public road leading from Golts to what was formerly known as Morris Station but now known as 'Willow Hill.' The location may have been on the north side of the new road paralleling the track from Morris Station to Golts, the new portion of the Hurlock Corner Road. In the deed it is not clear whether it is this road or the old road that now passes Wesley Henry Church. According to Arthur Brown, Sr., of Willow Hill the school that he attended during the 1930s was north of the old road and south of the new one. Its one room sometimes had to try to accommodate 80 children, an indication of the previous size of the community. After graduating from the seventh grade at the age of twelve or thirteen, to be able to continue one's education, one had to travel to Garnett School in Chestertown, the county's only high school for black children. Because of the great distance from Golts, very few went on to high school. This one-room school was closed circa 1940, partly for lack of sufficient numbers of students to keep it open. Thereafter Willow Hill children were transported to Sandfield School near Millington. The schoolhouse was converted to a dwelling and later burned.

A July 25, 1884, deed (SB 5/613) indicates a defection from Wesley Henry  
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Church and the establishment of a new church in the community by a group of trustees that included some of Wesley Henry's former trustees. For \$50 Daniel H. Kent [of Wilmington, Del.] and his wife Mary E. Kent sold one-eighth of an acre to trustees Isaac Lee (after whom Wesley Henry Church had informally come to be known), Hemly Emsley, Perry Thompson, Solomon Holland, Joseph Martin, Upton Brown, George Price, and Theodore Lockerman (all designated as colored). The new church was called the Colored Methodist Episcopal Bethelite Church, evidently somehow affiliated with both the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Bethelites. If this property ceased to be used by this church group, it was to revert to the Kents or their heirs. This deed reveals, as does the deed for the white Golts Methodist Church (K-627) of the same year, that the Kents evidently intended to be the "developers" of a new, "laid-out" town around the present five-roads crossroads of Golts, where the train station came to be located after initially being at Morris Station, 6/10 of a mile to the southwest near Willow Hill. Kent may have been responsible for the moving of the station and perhaps for the building of new roads (Black Bottom Road at least and perhaps the road north to Cold Well Corner). A plat for the town referred to as Goltz (though the village is thought to have been named after a storekeeper there named Thomas Golt and initially called Golt's Station) was not found. Looking at the crossroads area of Golts today, one would not suspect that it was to be a "laid-out" town. The Kents evidently had bought several large tracts in 1883 and 1884, the white church's lot coming from one and the black church's from another. The lot for the Bethelite church had come from a 60-acre tract (excepting two lots sold previously, evidently for the new town) of woodland owned by the Blackiston heirs and that adjoined land of Edward Morgan.

According to the Bethelite church deed, the church lot was to start 380 yards west of "the intersection formed by the westerly side of Front Street in said town, formerly known as the Delaware and Sassafras roads [now Bradford Johnson Road], and the north side of the Kent and Queen Anne's railroad, and running from thence northerly" 150 feet along the west side of Madison Street to a corner, then west and parallel with the railroad 50 feet to another corner, then south and parallel with Madison Street 100 feet to a corner, then east along the north side of the railroad. This appears to be the site of what is now called New Bethel Church, now African Methodist Episcopal in affiliation. There is another, later deed (JTD 29/163, in 1914) from the Kents to the trustees of the M. E. Bethelite Church. This one was not read, but it may have perfected the previous deed. It was apparently related to the deed recorded on the next page from the trustees of the Bethelite church to St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church at Golt; it may have signaled the changeover from Methodist Episcopal affiliation to African Methodist Episcopal. The present New Bethel Church appears to date from the early twentieth century.

Also in 1884, a few months after the deed to the Bethelite church, an addition seems to have been made to the property of Wesley Henry Church. With a deed dated October 21, 1884, Edmond Morgan of New Castle, Delaware, sold 2-1/2 acres to the trustees of "the African Union Methodist Protestant Church called Wesley Henry Chapel--formerly called Lee's Chapel." The trustees were Isaac Spencer, Louis McKenny, Robert Hudson, Perry McKenny, Benjamin Everitt, Joseph Brown, and Alfred Boyer, colored people." The price  
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was \$62.50. The lot, "in the Maryland and Delaware Forest," adjoined the lands of the heirs of the late William H. Blackiston, the church lot of Wesley Henry Chapel, "and others." This lot appears to be to the north of the earlier church lot, between the church and the railroad. Why the church was buying this property is not indicated. It was simply to be "for the use and benefit of the members of the African Union Methodist Protestant Church living at Wesley Henry Chapel. . . and the vicinity thereof and to and for no other use intent or purposes." It is possible that it may have been for a cemetery or cemetery extension, but the present cemetery does not seem to be precisely the way the courses indicate. Also, to the north of the present cemetery, between it and the railroad, is a lane to a dwelling.

The present church building is said to date from 1904, the preceding building having burned. It is not known if the preceding building dated from circa 1854 or whether it was a later building. The cornerstone, moved from its original location that was covered when the recent lavatory additions were made, says "Wesly [sic] Henry A. U. M. P. Church, October 23, 1904."

The coming to the Willow Hill-Golts area in 1868 of the Townsend branch line of the Delaware railroad changed the area. The train station was first called Morris Station and located close to Willow Hill. A few years later, perhaps with the involvement of Daniel Kent, the developer of the new planned town of Golts (which evidently did not live up to its promise), the station was relocated to the Golts crossroads, 6/10 of a mile to the northeast. Black Bottom Road was built from the Massey-Delaware road to Golts and continued north as the Cold Well Corner road. Golts became a shipping and receiving center for the area around it. A cannery was built (probably in the late nineteenth century), perhaps by a Mr. Preston; it was later owned by a Mr. Woodburn, near the train track on the Cold Well Corner road. The Golts cannery was one of a number of canneries that were established along the rail line. Processing mainly tomatoes but also asparagus, peas, beans and corn, the Golts cannery provided seasonal employment for a large number of local people, especially residents of the Willow Hill community. Like the other canneries, the Golts cannery sent its products north on the train. By World War II the cannery was closed.

During the late nineteenth century a local logging industry developed centered around Golts to harvest the nearby dense forests. Portable steam-powered sawmills were taken from place to place in the woods, with the logs hauled to them by mule teams and then the products or logs taken to the railroad station. According to Mrs. Reba Wharton, whose Vansant family has long been in the area, the logging was mostly to provide railroad ties and wood for paper manufacture, as well as to provide building lumber. The ubiquitous gum trees were harvested for paper manufacturers. Oak is the other important kind of tree in the Golts-area forests; the few pines now present are relatively recent. Though logging is still done in the area, as a major industry it declined after World War I. While it lasted, it provided employment for blacks as well as whites.

By the turn of the century Golts was said to have had four or five general stores serving the considerable population in the area, from farmers to loggers to the mostly black farm laborers and logging laborers that were  
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needed in great numbers before the age of mechanization. The one-storey frame store across Black Bottom Road from the Golts Methodist Church survives.

With the coming of Prohibition in 1919 many Golts area residents, black and white, found the combination of the nearby dense woods, the presence of the rail line, the great distance from the county seat and the sheriff, the proximity of the state line, and the availability of local grain to be conducive to the establishment of stills and bootlegging operations. Although it is true that such were located in other parts of Kent County, including a notably large establishment on the Massey-Galena Road near present-day Route 301, there seems to have been a concentration in and around Golts. With Prohibition coinciding first with a post World War I agricultural depression and then with the Great Depression of 1929 and later, bootlegging provided a means to economic survival for many.

Before Prohibition, Kent County's position on liquor had been quite strait-laced. State law had given each county the right to decide on liquor sales, and Kent had voted to be dry (though neighboring Queen Anne's County was wet, allowing purchases there). However, for a short time after the repeal of Prohibition, until the Maryland legislature could act, there was little liquor regulation affecting Kent County. But Delaware quickly imposed a ban on Sunday sales, leading to traffic to Kent County on that day. With travel to Golts from Delaware really easier than from the rest of Kent County, several "beer parlors" opened in Golts and enjoyed considerable Delaware trade. They began to hire good bands and provide space for dancing, and Golts soon became renowned as a night spot, drawing people from considerable distances on weekend evenings.

The now-unoccupied large two-storey frame building on the Bradford Johnson Road just southeast of the train track was one of the dance halls. After the late 1940s or early 1950s it became a store only. Interestingly, it is a rhombus in plan, its front and rear ends parallel to the road and its sides parallel to the train track. The second storey was said to have been for blacks, the first for whites. This building's use as a dance hall seems to have predated considerably the post-Prohibition era, having apparently been built circa 1870-1880 and early used for a dance hall, although its original purpose may have been as a cigar factory. The other large and later beer garden-dance hall is gone. It operated until about 1960 and about 1968 was burned.

For most if not all of the twentieth century through World War II there were four passenger trains daily (one in each direction on both the line to Chestertown and the line to Queen Anne's County) and several freight trains. After World War II passenger service was ended. By that time the cannery traffic was gone, the logging business had declined, and shippers along the lines were turning increasingly to trucks to transport goods. After the mail and milk contracts (which had in part supported passenger service) were lost to trucking and as travel by car became more common, the passenger trains ceased. There still are freight trains on the Townsend branch line, but service to Chestertown, at least is only once a week. There is no longer a station in Golts.

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The Golts community, including the white area in the vicinity of the main crossroads around the train station, the black area to the southwest at Willow Hill, and the white area to the southeast in the Forest (now gone) began to decline as a balanced community during the second quarter of the twentieth century. The white school closed about 1933, with the students afterwards transported to Massey. The black school was also closed and the children transported elsewhere. The white church was closed as a Methodist church just before World War II, in 1939 or 1940, although Mrs. Augustus Davis opened it later in the 1940s as the Gospel Church with chiefly her family in attendance. With the cannery closed, logging no longer as important, and farming increasingly mechanized, people moved elsewhere in search of employment, especially during and after World War II. The beer-garden and dance-hall era merely postponed what seemed inevitable. Today the population of Golts is far smaller than at the turn of the century, and many of its remaining residents do not work in Kent County but commute to nearby Delaware. The Willow Hill community itself is a shadow of its former self. It has been said that perhaps sixty families once lived there. While some of the more substantial dwellings remain, they are few.

Unlike the white Golts Methodist Church, Wesley Henry Church continues to function, though now with only a handful of worshippers on most Sundays. Homecoming services, when those with roots in the community return from the places to which their families moved, are well attended. The special family days held annually at the church--of the Brown, Lusby and Banks families and perhaps others, each with its own fixed date--are also big events. The church now seems to depend in part on support from those who moved away for physical maintenance and improvements.

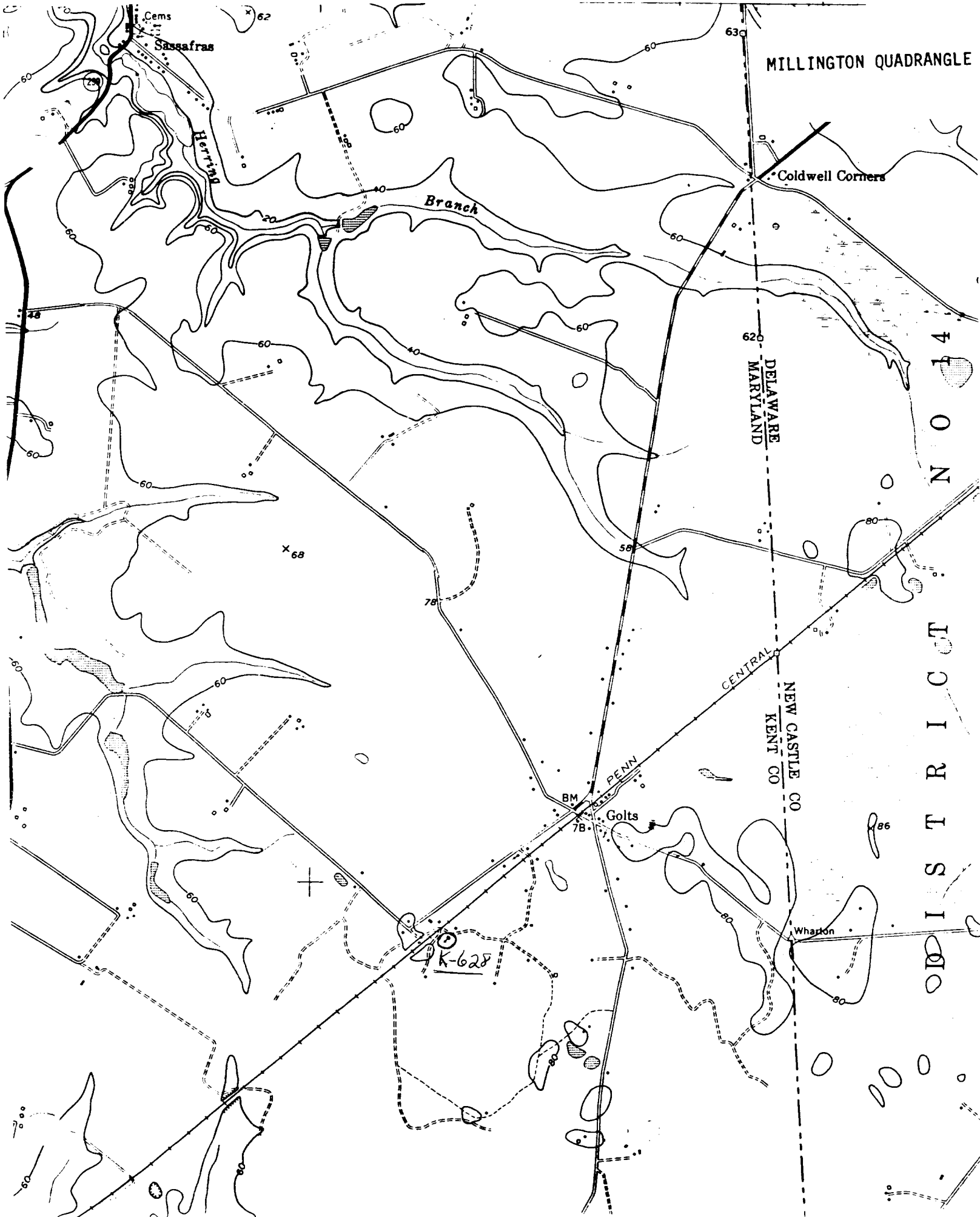
See also reports for K-627, Golts Methodist Church, and K-614, Golts Public School.

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MILLINGTON QUADRANGLE

Coldwell Corners

Branch

DELAWARE  
MARYLAND

CENTRAL  
NEW CASTLE CO  
KENT CO

PENN

BM

7B

Golts

Wharton

K-628

DISTRICT NO 14



K628-34

K-628

Wesley Henry Church

Wesley Henry Church Rd., Golts

M. Q. Fallaw - 5/23/86

View to north



K628-32

K-628

Wesley Henry Church

Wesley Henry Church Rd., Golts

M. Q. Fallaw - 5/23/86

View to southwest